**Much Wenlock & Cressage Medical Practice**

**May 2016**

**BOWEL CANCER SCREENING**

**1.** What ’s it all about?

**2.** Who should have it? and what to expect?

There are only 3 national screening programmes for cancer:

Mammograms for breast cancer (women only)

Cytology(smears) for cervical cancer (women only)

Bowel screening for bowel cancer (men and women)

**1.**

* The bowel screening programme aims to detect bowel cancer at an early stage so that it can be treated and cured.
* The test involves looking for microscopic traces of blood in your poo . You receive a test kit in the post which is simple to use and understand and is carried out in the privacy of your own home and sent back (freepost) to the lab.

**2.**

* Those eligible for testing are men and women aged of 60-74.
* You are invited every two years to take part.
* You receive your test result directly and so does your GP.
* If the results are unclear you will be asked to repeat the test, if it is positive you will then be invited on for further tests.
* A normal test does not guarantee that you have not got bowel cancer.

It has been shown to be beneficial in detecting early cancers that would have gone undiagnosed/untreated for months in the past. Testing can be done after the age of 74 if the patient contacts the screening hub directly.

There is soon to be an age extension lowering the screening age to include more people and the test kit is due to be modified in the next 12 months to make it simpler to use.

Bowel cancer is the 4th most common cancer diagnosed in the UK every year . About 40,000 people get bowel cancer every year in the UK which works out roughly at a diagnosis being made every 15 minutes!

If caught early it is very treatable, however people are naturally embarrassed about talking about their bowel habits and often delay seeking medical advice. **PLEASE COME AND TALK TO US IF YOU ARE WORRIED**. Most of the time it will be nothing serious.

**Symptoms to be concerned about include:-**

* Passing blood from the back passage or mixed in with your poo.
* Abdominal pain or unplanned weight loss
* A change in your normal bowel habit that persists longer than a couple of weeks.

We recently received data on our bowel cancer pick up rate which showed that *only* 2/3 of those people who are eligible in our practice, are having this screening.

About **550** patients have been offered the test, in the last 12 months and declined. We want to see this improve as it will undoubtedly save lives. If you are worried please make an appointment and see a Doctor or the Nurse. If you don’t understand the test kit or some other aspect of the screening, then speak to one of us - we would be more than happy to help you.

Dr Fiona Hay and Partners.

Much Wenlock and Cressage Surgeries.